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Memory's Golden Urn.

By J. W. Chaffin.

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MEMORY'S GOLDEN URN;

OR,

A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF MAN'S JOURNEY FROM HIS MOTHER'S ARMS TO THE ARMS OF THE OLD ARM CHAIR, AND WHAT THE JOURNEY TEACHES.

By J. W. CHAFFIN, A. M.,

Author of "The Battle of Calvary."

CHICAGO:

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MEMORY'S GOLDEN URN;

OR,

A Retrospective View of Man's Journey from his Mother's Arms to the Arms of the Old Arm-Chair, and What the Journey Teaches.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

I.

Alone I sit in stillness of the night,
While visions rise before my inner sight;
They're visions of my early childhood days,
And those of later years, on which I gaze.
They come with glory clad before my eyes,
Like angel forms from sinless Paradise.

II.

I seem to live my early life again,
And far recede from sphere of careworn men.

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I lie enfolded in my Mother's arms,
All wrapt in early spotless childhood's charms.
I'm fondly pressed to mother's heart once more,
As in those sinless, artless days of yore.
Her voice of love, I heard in childhood's bower,
Touched chords which vibrate to the present hour.
Through all my noisy, busy, troublous years
That voice came stealing sweetly on my ears;
While mountain billows fierce around did roll,
It touched and soothed and lifted up my soul.
Æolian Harp whose sweetest symphonies
Enraptured all the old Æolides,
Ne'er lent to passing wind so sweet a strain
As that which comes within my heart again.

III.

The evening song of loving father dear,
Is falling now upon my list'ning ear.
Sweet lyre of Orpheus—the harp of gold,
Whose charming music o'er Olympus rolled,
Ne'er filled the Argonauts with such delight
As father's song doth fill my soul to-night.

IV.

The joyous laugh and noise of tiny feet
Once more these anxious bending ears do greet;
I breathe afresh amid the shady bowers
The fragrant breath of early woodland flowers.

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To mother dear in joyful haste I bring
A floral offering from the lap of spring.
In hearty, joyous glee I chase again
The humming-bird—that swiftly flying gem,
And see the tiny thing with plumage fair
Poising itself on wing amid the air.
The gorgeous, golden-tinted butterflies
Again from moistened earth before me rise.
They gently move—a variegated band,
Eluding still the grasp of childish hand.
I watch the fleecy clouds in squadrons fly
In quick succession 'neath the arching sky,
And think in them well might the angels ride,
In all their matchless beauty, pomp and pride.
Again I bow upon the tender knee,
Beneath the overhanging willow tree;
At gurgling tide I slake my thirst once more,
As in the joyous, childish days of yore.
No nectar stream e'er gave so sweet a draught
As that which I in early childhood quaffed.

V.

Now haunts of riper childhood years are seen,
O'erspread with more than gorgeous silver sheen.
My thoughts are fragrant of those sunny bowers,
Where oft I gathered aromatic flowers;
And tender voices through my mem'ry come,
And scenes familiar of the years agone.

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VI.

I hear again the robin's early lay,
While in the east there comes the flush of day.
I breathe the breath of morning as it glows,
While dew-drops linger still upon the rose;
And in the later, warmer, sunny hours,
See honey-bees draw nectar from the flowers.
I rove again o'er undulating fields,
Whose clover-bloom the richest perfume yields.

VII.

I join my playmates as in times agone,
And trip with them once more o'er greenclad lawn.
No pastures of Messenia's ancient land,
Nor yet Laconia's emerald fields most grand,
Of which we are so picturesquely told
By great Euripides of Athens old,
Were ever half so gorgeously arrayed,
As were the lawns on which I oft-times played.

VIII.

With joyous heart I seem to bound again,
'Mid fields of nodding, ripening, golden grain;
Once more in meadows sweet I join in play,
And smell the incense of the new-mown hay.
The forest grand again I seem to see,
While squirrel leaps once more from tree to tree.

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The songs of birds are falling on the ear—
The songs with joyous heart I used to hear.
Athwart the little silvery, purling rill,
Is placed again the imitative mill.
And now my kite is borne on breeze so high,
It's like a speck against the azure sky;
Successful æronaut ne'er felt so proud,
When silken palace reached the far off cloud,
As did I, when that toy so frail and fair
Was borne aloft on currents of the air.
I'm angling now along the water's side,
Where silvery fish are darting through the tide;
The sleepless stream of Cephisus of old,
Whose currents through the land of Phocis rolled,
Described so grandly, as the student sees,
In writings of the ancient Sophocles,
Nor that which once Parnissus' banks did lave,
Possessed such charms, or e'er such pleasures gave,
As did those streams by which I used to play
In riper childhood's joyous, sunny day.

IX.

And now I stand in autumn's chilly night,
And gaze upon Aurora's streakings bright,
And wonder if they are but prophecies
Of crimson wars and dread calamities.
I watch the meteors as they quickly fly,
Like corruscations 'neath the star-decked sky,

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And wonder whence they come and where they go,
With all their grandeur and with all their glow.

X.

The winter comes, and brightly burns the fire,
Enkindled then by hands of loving sire;
Nor comes from grates of burning coal such glow,
As came from open hearth of long ago.
Once more with brothers dear I seem to bound,
While thickly fall the snow-flakes on the ground;
I join with them as in that joyous day,
And swiftly ride upon the slender sleigh;
Now in great glee and in my boyish pride,
Again I'm skating on the frozen tide.
I sit in loving family group once more,
As in those grand old winter nights of yore.
The old log school-house with its puncheon floor,
And string and latchet at the rude made door—
In all its well-known features reappears,
As in my early joyous schooling years.
No alma mater can in mem'ry hold
More sacred place than that rude house of old.

XI.

The voices of my early schoolmates dear,
Are falling now distinctly on my ear;
I seem to read once more with thrilling joy,
A book I read in school, when but a boy;

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A book, for rich instruction and sublime,
Has had no equal in the later time:
'Tis grand old "English Reader," book of yore,
On which I feast my eyes and heart once more.
Again with wondrous joy I seem to pass,
In triumph to the head of spelling class;
Nor did Great Alexander ever know
A greater pride than mine o'er vanquished foe,
Nor did he deem his vict'ry more complete,
When all the world lay conquered at his feet.

CHAPTER II.

YOUTHHOOD.

I.

Now come the scenes of joyous youthful time,
All filled with hopes and radiance sublime.
I seem ensphered in youth's sweet paradise,
And all its pleasing sports before me rise.
I doff the hat and linen garb once more,
And leave them lying on the emerald shore,
And plunge beneath the running, sparkling stream,
Nor of the slightest danger do I dream.
The ancient Priestess who was purified
By bathing in Castalia's crystal tide,

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Which at Parnassus' base did grandly flow,
In mystic ages of the long ago,
Did never feel a grander cleansing power,
Than did I feel in that sweet bathing hour.

II.

Again I wend along the shady vale,
A thousand fragrant odors I inhale.
Its gorgeous scenery which around me lay
Is grander far than that of Thessaly:
No vale of Tempe with its sylvan calm
E'er sent such joys to heart of Grecian man,
As once I shared in vales I used to roam,
Near by my early, humble, childhood home.

III.

I climb again the side of rugged hill,
And in my heart I feel a joyous thrill.
Old Mount Olympus peering in its pride,
With Ossa standing near its southern side,
Ne'er gave to man or gods such joys sublime,
As gave to me the hills I used to climb.

IV.

And now I'm perched upon the champing steed,
And off I dash I think with matchless speed.
Fleet Pegasus renowned in mythic lore,
That for great Zeus awful thunder bore,

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Could not in swiftness keep along the side,
The proud and noble steed I used to ride.

V.

At close of day I seem to sit once more
With brother, sister, at dear father's door,
And watch the queenly moon in yonder sky—
Talk of her seas, and vales, and mountains high.
And there amid the evening twilight still,
I hear again the song of Whip-poor-will.

VI.

Now Autumn time, as in those early years,
In all its solemn grandeur re-appears.
The forest leaves of golden hue I see:
Brown nuts are falling from the monarch tree:
The grand old cultured orchards all around,
With rip'ning fruits are bending to the ground:
Nor did the garden of Hesperides
E'er yield such fruit as did my father's trees.

VII.

But now I pass from early youth so dear,
To riper youth's grand Eldorado sphere.
My pathway leads 'mid sweet entwining flowers—
As sweet as those which grew in Eden's bowers.
No withered buds of promise yet are seen:
The leaves are clad in fadeless living green.

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No shadow yet, has gathered o'er my skies,
And hope's grand visions come before my eyes:
Warm-hearted friends are gath'ring all around,
The future years are with a radiance crowned:
The stream of life on which I'm gently borne,
As yet has never felt the raging storm:
Ten thousand streamlets now from ev'ry side,
Come leaping in to swell its pearly tide.

VIII.

I feel within the depths of youthful heart,
A wondrous power into action start—
A greater force than that which doth control
Stupendous orbs which in their orbits roll.
The power I feel within my bosom move
Is that of wondrous, and resistless Love:
'Tis love for faultless, artless, charming maid—
One at whose sacred shrine my heart is laid.
Fair Andromeda of the times of old,
Of whom we are in ancient legends told—
Whose beauty, as historic student sees,
Surpassed the beauty of the Nersides,
Could not in grace and beauty be compared
With her, who once my first affections shared.

IX.

In academic halls once more I'm found,
With fellow students greeting all around:

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I see again as in those youthful years
The Hill of Science which in grandeur peers;
I now ascend afresh its rugged side
And feel again the thrill of student's pride.
I pluck afresh 'mid its sequestered bowers
Most beautiful and aromatic flowers.
I quaff its limpid waters as they roll,
Which give enlargement to the mind and soul.
And as I gaze toward its lofty crest,
I feel again new purpose and new zest.
Ambition's fires are burning in my heart—
I will excel in science and in art:
Resolved am I, my name shall yet be found,
Enrolled among the great and high renowned.
I trust that at my country's pressing call,
My voice shall echo in the Senate Hall,
Or that in literary world I'll rise,
Like star of brightest luster in the skies.
Then fields of science wide I shall explore,
And fill my mind with richest ancient lore.
Proud vessel—filled with glowing hopes, doth ride
On life's most grand and smooth and silv'ry tide.
While wide the gate of promise doth unfold,
Upon a distant, gorgeous sea of gold;
And mighty castles in their grandeur rise
With domes uplifted high toward the skies.

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CHAPTER III.

MANHOOD.

I.

I'm gathering books with an eclectic hand,
And strive to make them yield their treasures grand.
I seek to understand proud nature's laws
And trace her movements each, to secret cause.
With Miller to the depths of earth descend—
'Mid ancient fossils, there my steps to wend:
And try to read on rocky tablets old,
How long this earth hath in its orbit rolled.
With Newton now in ecstasy I rise,
And tread the star-paved aisles of grand old skies.
With Locke and Edwards in their grasp sublime,
I try to trace the myst'ries of the mind.
And now the hist'ry of the plants I trace,
And that of bird and beast and human race.

II.

On nature's beauties now I feast my eyes—
The beauties of the land, the seas and skies.
Still deeper in her hidden depths I go,
Where marv'lous beauties all around me glow;
By microscopic aid the natural eye
A universe of wonders doth descry.

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And now I'm fixing on still wider plan,
For proud achievments of the mental man:
I'll fill my study with rich books of lore,
And wider fields of learning I'll explore.
My mental life shall grow more deep and wide,
Like grandest river's ever onward tide.
Indeed, the highest cultured man in time,
Has but commenced his upward march sublime,
And while he's here he's but a prophecy
Of what he'll in eternal future be.

III.

Great wealth I seem to grasp with eager hands,
Palatial home before my vision stands:
Its parlors grand, their grandeur do unfold,
Like nature's evening parlor hung with gold;
And gorgeous hopes within are mounting high,
As streaks of gold ascend the morning sky:
The thought is cherished in the depth of soul,
That I shall reach ere long the distant goal.

IV.

I now at Hymen's altar gently bow,
And breathe from depth of heart the marriage vow.
The cup I drink amid the festal scene,
Is sweeter far than fabled nectar stream.
Warm-hearted friends are now on ev'ry side,
As out I sail upon life's grander tide.

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As yet this sea has nèither storm nor crest—
It lies as if in calm nocturnal rest.
Cerulean, serene are arching skies,
Sweet zephyrs come, as if from paradise.
Ten thousand charms along my journey play—
I onward haste to realms of bright'ning day.

V.

I'm proudly sitting by a being fair,
Who doth my joys and heartfelt sorrows share.
Her eye, to me, like Heaven's gate above,
Reveals a sea of purity and love.
Her tones like waves of Heaven's music roll,
In solemn, soothing grandeur o'er my soul.
'Tis her on whom I gladly did bestow
My heart's great wealth of love, long years ago.
And now I sit amid these happy days,
And watch my children in their joyous plays.
I join with them in all their childish glee,
And feel again the heights of ecstasy.
I see them trip along with step so light,
And hear the well-known voices say "Good-night."
I trace them as they reach the riper years,
And feel within, my mingled hopes and fears.

VI.

I've reached the glory of my manhood time,
And feel as though my strength shall ne'er decline:

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Not stronger was great Hercules of old,
Of whom we are in Grecian legends told;
Nor did Tydides of more ancient days,
Who, Homer says, "Enormous weights could raise,"
To men of far back Golden Age reveal
A greater strength than I this moment feel.

VII.

Now pressing cares are greatly multiplied,
And disappointments come on every side.
The overarching sky, once calm and bright,
By darkling clouds is hidden from my sight.
And now I find my vessel, launched in pride,
Is out upon a deep and storm-tossed tide.
Instead of gentle zephyrs as before,
I hear the tempest's wild and dreadful roar.

VIII.

One solemn truth to me is now proclaimed,
That I the zenith of my strength have gained.
All things material that live and grow,
Have bounds of growth, nor can beyond them go.
This law of limit, we rejoice to find,
Does not inhere in nature of the mind.
Indeed, the changeless laws of mind do teach,
The end of mental growth we'll never reach:
That while the outer man is in its prime
The inner man is in its infant time.

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There's no fixed circle in eternity,
In which we ever shall revolving be.

IX

Now 'neath my toils and rapid flight of time
I feel approach of physical decline.
This one prophetic truth I've found of late—
Things once I moved seem now of double weight;
The hills I climbed with ease, nor thought them high,
Now lift their summits far up toward the sky;
Paths once I trod while heedless of their length,
Now lay a heavy tribute on my strength;
My locks once dark, with silver now are laid,
The luster of my eye begins to fade;
Great time-made, deepening furrows even now,
Are found upon my greatly care-worn brow.
O can it be, this once strong frame of mine,
The workmanship of Architect Divine—
This temple grander and more wondrous made
Than grandest palace with its gems inlaid—
O can it be this temple so sublime,
Ere long with all its grandeur must decline?
'Tis hard to feel that it so soon must die,
And in such awful, solemn ruins lie;
But why should I one moment e'er repine
At this my destined Autumn season time?
The mighty forests clad in grand array,
Have their appointed seasons of decay.

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Nor should I ever murmur at my fate,
As 'tis transition to a grander state.
To me, this mortal change shall surely bring
The glories of a never-ending spring.
This body sown in weakness, shall at length,
Be raised and clad with an immortal strength.
Then let its present splendor pass away,
There'll come the glories of the better day.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD AGE.

I.

The snow of time is resting on my head:
My golden years of life have well nigh fled:
And while I sit beside Life's tide below,
I'm catching gleams of that bright long ago.
O this to me is Resurrection night!
Long-buried scenes are bursting into sight.
They come before my now enraptured eyes,
And linger like the dreams of Paradise.
The dead revive as with a magic wand—
Before me in their grace and beauty stand.

II.

Once more have come before my inner sight,
The bowers of my childish heart's delight:

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Their leaves are sere, their flowers are no more—
They all have vanished with the days of yore.
Too transient was that sunny childhood day,
Like fragile rose it bloomed and died away.
Its fragrance still doth linger in the air;
Its music still the gentle zephyrs bear.

III.

I've also gone in mem'ry back to-night,
To youth-hood's time of hopes and visions bright.
Alas! its scenes and joyous hopes have fled;—
Most of its plans are numbered with the dead.
My vessel which then sailed in pride and glee,
Lies buried low 'neath Time's great rolling sea.
And so I've seen my lofty castles all
Like ancient temples into ruin fall.

IV.

Again, in thought I've wended back my way
To fresh and vigorous Manhood's active day,
When plans for gaining fortunes of the world,
Gulf streams in trade to utter ruin hurled.
And thus I've seen most all my hopes expire,
As clouds of gold from evening skies retire.

V.

If mighty nations once of pomp and pride
Are lying deeply buried side by side

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Beneath the Mediterranean Sea,
As ancient nations all are said to be,
So lie my cherished earthly hopes sublime
Beneath the ever-rolling tide of Time.

VI.

My steps grow feeble, tremulous, and few,
While onward still life's journey I pursue.
Like balls they are, which lose projectal force
When nearly ended is their upward course.
And still with quicker, firmer steps I rise,
To regions far beyond the star-lit skies.
Dull is my touch of sense to outward things,
And still I feel the wave of angel wings.
The film of age has gathered o'er my eyes,
As clouds obscure the brightness of the skies:
But clearer come before my inner sight
The glories of that world of cloudless light.
Time's dulled my hearing with its yearly rounds,
As massive walls obstruct the march of sounds:
But more distinctly doth the inner ear
The rolling anthems of the angels hear.

VII.

My heart lies open as the open day:
Nor in it does one vile affection play.
The carnal—fleshly appetites are slain,
And spirit now, instead of flesh, doth reign.

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In crystal clearness, like the limpid lake
Which golden stars into itself doth take,
My heart takes images of things divine,
And there I'd have them ever brightly shine.
I'm freed from conflicts of ambitious life:
Have laid aside earth's tinsel and its strife.
My eyes are open to the rising day,
A voice divine is speaking 'long the way.
I've reached the upper regions of the soul,
Where no obscuring vapors ever roll.

VIII.

But why did I, for such achievements wait
Until Old Age, or in life's evening late?
Sure, God requires such vict'ries to be won
While blood is warm, and passions warmly run.
'Tis cleansing grace of God, and not old age,
That conquers fleshly passions in their rage.
If grace cannot these passions thus subdue,
Then Time does that which grace can never do.

IX.

I'm gazing upward in this evening late,
While well-known faces beam from heaven's gate.
I'm smitten now with beams of Paradise,
And Mounts with glory clad before me rise.
I'm upward drawn toward the seraphim,
Where pearly gates ere long shall close me in:

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I see the hosts, all robed in spotless white,
Through wide unfolded gates of love and light.
Mine's not a doubtful title to that land,
By faith my feet already on it stand.
I'm breathing, even now, its fragrant air,
I'm plucking of its fruits, so rich and fair.
And in the depths of wondrous secret soul,
Its melodies do grandly, sweetly roll.

X.

The journey of my life will soon be o'er,
My keel ere long will touch the other shore:
To me the gate of death, which now I see,
Shall then the gate of coronation be.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE JOURNEY TEACHES.

I.

Life's Journey hath impressive lessons taught,
Each one with high instruction richly fraught.
One is: 'tis good in God, as well as wise,
To draw a veil before our youthful eyes.
Were youth to have their vision opened wide
To all life's woes, to Marah's bitter tide,

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And see how empty all their gorgeous dreams
Of earthly good that in their future gleams,
They'd never half unfold their energies,
Nor spread their sails far out upon life's seas.
O yes, 'tis well such veil our eyes doth hold,
Till years increase and we our strength unfold,
And learn to look from transient things away,
To things eternal, 'mid eternal day.

II.

This lesson, too, Life's Journey doth impart,
Engraven it should be on every heart:—
That all life's trials, though severe they be,
May prove a helpful, blessed ministry.
From these, as God's alembic, may arise
A higher, grander life 'neath grander skies.
Like fragrant plants are Christian virtues found,
Most fragrant when they're incensed most profound.
The grandest Christian men, we oft-times see,
Arise from vales of deep adversity.
But let this truth be ever kept in mind,
A truth in God's eternal Word we find:
To those alone these trials blessings prove,
Whose hearts are stayed on God, in faith and love.

III.

Another lesson doth life's journey yield,
And all along the ages 'tis revealed:

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That they who trust in God, and God alone,
As firmly stand as God's eternal throne.
Proud kingdoms into ruin may be hurled,
Moved from its place may be the solid world,
Though all the suns and planets God hath made
Were in one heap of awful ruins laid,
Yet he whose faith is firm, whose love is pure,
Would stand above the awful wreck, secure.

IV.

Life's course reveals this truth in ev'ry land:
That life's a field of conflict broad and grand.
'Tis grander field than that of crimson stain,
Where mighty chieftains are by chieftains slain;
It calls for greater courage than was found
In Spartan band, in hist'ry so renowned.
And greater battles here are fought and won
Than heroes ever fought 'neath circling sun.
Though Alexander, with triumphant ranks,
From plains of Thebes moved on to Danube's banks,
And from the Hellespont did proudly go
To shores of wondrous Nile, 'mid mighty foe;
And though to Indus, in his conquering pride,
He rolled the battle's awful, crimson tide;
Though all the nations then so great and proud
Were at the Conqueror's feet most humbly bowed,
Yet no such victory did he ever win,
As he who conquers Titan foes within.

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V.

Another lesson hath life's race revealed,
Nor should it from the godless be concealed.
'Tis this: Life's failures do not bring a blight
To Christian joys and prospects of delight;
That still our lives may lives of grandeur be,
And lives of highest joys and victory;
Life's not a failure, though all worldly schemes
May fruitless be, as our baseless dreams.
Let heart be true to heart, and true to God,
Then none need fear the rough and thorny road.
The Calvaries which in the pathway rise
Are Mounts of Vision lifting to the skies.
The clouds which o'er the journey thickly lie,
Are secret places of the Lord Most High.
The nights that o'er the mental heavens steal,
But stars of brightest luster do reveal.
The surging seas that like the thunders roar,
But wash most precious diamonds to the shore.
'Twas on the stormy, foaming Galilee,
Peter and James and John their Lord did see;
'Twas there amid the winds and waves so high,
They heard those words: " Be not afraid; 'tis I."
There Galilean Sea laid wide and deep,
And calm as spotless maiden's dreamless sleep.

VI.

We should not dread the cup of gall we drink,

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Nor ever for one moment dare to think
That God will leave us helpless and alone,
While still our hand is fixed upon His Throne.

VII.

Another lesson doth life's span unfold,
More precious far than mines of richest gold;
'Tis this — There is no hope but what is frail,
Save that which "enters that within the vail."
As anchor holds the ship 'mid dashing tide,
While awful tempest sweeps the ocean wide,
Nor on the lee-shore lets the vessel strand,
But holds it fast, as with omnific hand,
So doth the anchor Hope sustain the soul,
While life's great billows 'round it wildly roll.

VIII.

O what a matchless hope, and how sublime!
That casts its brightness o'er the sea of time;
That fringes darkest cloud with silver sheen,
And clads the sterile mount with living green;
That lifts the soul from deepest vale below,
To Mount of Vision wrapped in Heaven's glow;
That gives us strength to tread life's Calv'ry road,
And firmly walk beneath oppressive load;
That strews the future with most fragrant flowers,
And leads to sweet, enchanting, fadeless bowers;

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That conquers death whose banner is unfurled
In triumph now, throughout this sin-cursed world;
That goes to silent cities of the dead,
Where crawling worms on sacred flesh are fed,
And there lifts up triumphant song sublime,
And sings of coming Resurrection time;
That opens wide before our longing eyes,
The pearly gates of sinless paradise;
That joins us to our kindred 'round the throne,
Where tears and farewell words are never known;
That gives us Heaven's eternal golden lyre,
And joins us to the chanting angel choir;
That points to future vistas grand and bright,
To endless progress in the realms of light,
To sparkling truths which there our eyes shall see—
To truths in depths of great eternity—
To heights of knowledge even yet unknown
To prophet old or angel 'round the throne.

IX.

Let hopes that fill the youthful heart with fire,
Fade, quickly fade, or like a breath expire:
Let hopes of manhood, gorgeously arrayed,
Like morning's early beauties—early fade:
Let all earth's hopes be transient as the flowers,
But let this anchor hope be ever ours—
This deathless hope through Revelation given,
A hope that anchors in Eternal Heaven.

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